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Security Council

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Letter dated 16 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from Mr. Najib Ghadbian, Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition to the United Nations, dated 16 August 2016 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the High Negotiations Committee and as requested by His Excellency Riad Hijab, General Coordinator of the Committee, it is my honour to transmit to you a letter addressed to you from Mr. Hijab dated 16 August 2016 (see enclosure). The letter discusses the gravity of the chemical weapons attacks in the city of Aleppo.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition
to the United Nations

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic]

High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

I write to you in order to draw your attention to the horrific situation in besieged eastern Aleppo and to new reports that the forces of the Assad regime, with the support of their allies, the Russian air force and Iranian militias, have used chemical weapons to attack Aleppo, in direct violation of Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015). In addition, napalm, which is internationally prohibited, was used against Darayya in Rif Dimashq on 12, 13 and 14 August 2016.

On 10 August 2016, civilian residents of the Zabdiyah neighbourhood of Aleppo were attacked with illegal chemical substances when regime helicopters dropped barrel bombs containing toxic material. Area hospitals treated 60 injured, 40 of whom were children. All the victims later exhibited signs consistent with exposure to chlorine gas, including choking, coughing and shortness of breath. It has been confirmed that at least three civilians, including a woman and her son, have died as a result of the chemical weapon attacks.

The deadly chemical weapon attack of 10 August on Aleppo is yet another episode in the regime's chain of attacks against civilians in Aleppo. On the evening of 1 August, aid workers working with the Syrian Civil Defence reported that unguided bombs containing chlorine struck civilian homes in Saraqib, Idlib governorate, and injured at least 28 civilians, including 18 women and 10 children.

The use of chlorine gas as a weapon of war to terrorize and/or kill civilians is a war crime and a direct violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Syria is a party, and of Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015). In its resolution 2209 (2015), the Council specifically states that the use of chlorine gas as a weapon would constitute a violation of resolution 2118 (2013) and, in this context, it decided in the event of future non-compliance with resolution 2118 (2013) to impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Measures must now be implemented pursuant to Chapter VII, and the Assad regime's repeated and systematic use of chemical weapons must be met with sanctions in order to deter future war crimes, including the use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians.

On behalf of the people of Aleppo, Idlib and Darayya, and all of Syria, we call on the Security Council to:

1. Instruct the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to investigate the attacks of 1 and 10 August on the city of Aleppo and the cities of Saraqib in Idlib and Darayya in Rif Dimashq, which killed four people and wounded dozens, and to present a preliminary analysis of its investigations to the Security Council at the next briefing on the humanitarian situation.

2. Impose measures pursuant to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, as called for in Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015), and take urgent action to protect Syrian civilians from additional attacks

with chemical and internationally prohibited weapons, including the use of naval assets stationed in the Mediterranean Sea to impose a "no-bombardment" zone throughout Syria.

3. Ensure that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, including chlorine gas, are held accountable, as required by Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015) and 2235 (2015). This can be accomplished either by creating a special court for Syria and/or by taking measures under local or international jurisdiction to be implemented by the Governments of Member States.

You must not allow the chemical weapons attacks in Aleppo, Idlib and Darayya to become another ignominious stain on the collective conscience of the Security Council. The Council and its member have a mandate to protect civilians from chemical weapon attacks, and the time has come for members to fulfil that mandate. To date, some 2,000 Syrian civilians have been killed by chemical attacks, while hundreds of thousands of other civilians have been killed by various other types of weapons. I ask you, how many Syrians must die before the members of the Security Council are forced to act? How many innocent Syrian children will choke to death from chlorine gas before you answer their calls to provide protection for civilians?

Syrian civilians need protection from chemical weapons and other internationally prohibited weapons and from all indiscriminate air strikes. A "no-bombardment" zone is one possible way of providing that protection. I should like, through you, to urge the member States to impose such zone, despite the failure of the Security Council to carry out its mandate to protect civilians.

• https://youtu.be/VDnkD1EOyR8

(*Signed*) Riad **Hijab**
General Coordinator
High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolutionary
and Opposition Forces